

Linda Clair
Meditation Retreat
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Transcription from Audio Recordings

File 1C – Saturday afternoon discussion

Linda: So now is the time where I want to hear about your innermost feelings, (Laughter) issues, questions, or just what's going on. Often the first day there's not so much going on.

I did want to talk about the task roster a bit. It's a big part of the retreat so I want you to see it as part of your practice, a big part of your meditation practice, and do it as willingly and with your body as much as possible. Don't separate things too much. Don't go, "I've got my formal sitting and the rest of the time I'll just walk around thinking, looking." Use every moment you can, every activity you can, as a practice – doesn't matter what it is. The sitting is your foundation and from that you'll naturally, eventually, want to become much more aware of everything you're doing, much more grounded. So don't separate things into little categories – it's all a practice. Particularly here where you don't have the responsibilities of family, work, it's a great time just to devote to yourself, to you.

Question: I feel like I've been on a sustained retreat now for about a year, which is fantastic. So as much as possible I'm trying to use this time that I've got to bring the attention, as you say, not just into the sitting but into everything – walking, driving, shopping, cleaning. Even cleaning is more pleasant when...

Linda: Cleaning is a great practice.

Question: I feel it's taken a while but I feel like I'm letting go of stuff. I feel lighter and yet grounded as well. And it's wonderful to be back here again. Maybe because I have been doing this more sustained practice for quite a long time, it's really becoming clear to me, not just up here but through the body, that the body is – I used to think that I *have* a body. But now, I'm not sure, but it's almost like the body and the thing that I think is me co-exist together, and it's more of a dance between the part of me that thinks of myself as myself and the physical body that I co-exist with. It's been becoming obvious to me when I've been going through some kind of pain or things like that, where the body decides, "Now it's time to have a headache." It's not like it consults with me and says, "How about now?" It just sort of happens, so I've been trying to flow with that more. I'm just wondering if you have anything to offer in relation to that?

Linda: Well, in my experience the body starts to take over. Rather than the mind trying to override it all the time and say, "This is what I feel like doing. I don't feel like doing this, I want to do *this*." Eventually it's like the body takes over completely; it just does things. And it's not even really the body – it's just this. But you stop trying to override anything anymore, you just don't think about anything. The body does what it needs to do. It informs you and you listen rather than pushing it away. So if you're tired you go to sleep; you don't go, "I'm tired, I'll take a stimulant to get me through this," you have a rest. And you could say, "Sometimes you *have* to keep going." But when you look at it you don't, it's totally up to you. And I can see that in you because you were in that incredible momentum of working for so long, and you did look quite stressed, and you look like a completely different person now. It doesn't mean that you never work, but I think after you've had

a really busy working life it is a good thing, if you can, to have a break for a while and just look at things, like you have been doing.

But yes, the body starts to take over and it tells you what it wants. So you tend not to get as sick, you tend not to get as many headaches, and if you do get a bit sick it doesn't usually last for as long. I remember my teacher in Japan saying, "There is a right way of being sick." You can't always avoid being sick – and you don't want to *avoid* it but you do your best to stay healthy – but if you do get sick there is a right way of dealing with it. It's with as little fear as possible, staying as neutral as possible. So not just collapsing going, "Oh god, I'm sick!" but not trying to override it either. So there's this middle way of dealing with it. It can be quite difficult but you can do it. And it's quite amazing when it does happen and you do start to feel like you're coming down with something, and you have a rest but you deal with it in a very neutral way.

Question: That's like what I've been experiencing more and more – the capacity to pause and stop resisting. That's what I'm noticing at the moment, and that's made a massive difference. Because I did used to be kind of person who would override the body and just keep driving myself, but now it's like, "No." It's almost like respecting the messages. The body is an exquisite feedback mechanism if we just listen. So that's been really good.

Linda: So eventually you don't identify with the body. But of course you respect it because you're in this body, whatever state you're in – while you're alive you're in this body. So the body becomes this bridge, and this way of being here and containing this amazing energy and expressing it. But the *identity* with the body stops becoming the most important thing.

Question: I wanted to say that in the last few months – you used to talk about the consciousness quickening – and I feel like I'm beginning to pick up the mind's activities much quicker and clearer, and step back from them, then I've done before. It's been quite a different way of being.

Linda: Mmm. Can you give an example?

Question: If a thought comes about doing the shopping I don't pursue that. I let it go and just get on with what I'm doing. Sometimes I can feel it starting and I can turn away before it finishes what it wants to say.

Linda: That's great. That's what happens. You start to see every thought that arises and you can't separate things anymore so you can't ignore it. But you can't get into it either so it's like you can't rest. You're always working at this. It becomes the natural way to be.

Question: I still get caught up in things.

Linda: That will happen less and less if you stay vigilant. So you need to stay vigilant not just for a certain period but as much as possible.

Question: I feel like I've done far more work off the cushion than I have on.

Linda: Yes, but you've also got to be careful not to say, "Oh, the cushion is not as important," because that's what gives you the energy to do it the rest of the time. So keep doing that, keep going. This seven-days will really quicken it even more.

Question: I felt that even today. Today has been really strong.

Question: I'm finding the kitchen noise challenging. It doesn't come with thoughts; it feels like each noise is a sensation in me. And it's unusual – it's challenging and jarring and strange and I'm not sure what to do with it.

Linda: Just feel it in your body. I was going to say the first couple of days they're preparing for the next week, so the first couple of days it does tend to be noisier, and then it starts to calm down again.

Try not to see it as a distraction; use it. So if it keeps you in your body – however you feel, even if it's jarring – you're in your body. It's stopping you floating off into your imagination. So you can use it as a reason, "I can't get deeply into this because of that noise," or you can use the noise to get more deeply into this. So more deeply into your body, watching your reactions, accepting – "This is how it's going to be," off and on, not all the time.

Question: Yes, I don't feel judgemental; it's definitely more visceral.

Linda: So feel that – it means you're in your body. So being in your body isn't always going to be a pleasant thing, it's going to be painful. Most people are going to feel pain or some discomfort at times, during this seven days. It just comes with it. So use that, you can use anything, and it will keep you in your body. So you can use anything as a distraction or anything as something to keep you in your body.

Question: This is more like I want direction and clarification. What's been happening is that I've been sitting on high alert and things have been speeding up. But about keeping things simple, like when you told me how to set the intention, "I will sit here till the bell goes off," every word has become very meaningful. It becomes very strong for me. But what I want to ask is, when I'm meditating and in daily life, does keeping things simple no matter what's happening, is that okay? Just come back to the breath no matter what's happening? When I'm sitting and the movement outside has happened, sort of getting frustrated, whatever the thoughts are, just coming back here? When I'm really grounded I am just here, and then the breath is here and everything falls into place – my spine is straight, I'm still. Because, I hear your words and Roshi Sama's and Osho's – and my own versions of things, and I feel there is an ego there, and there's a projection there that's not true. So I want to understand – just keeping things simple and being grounded – is that enough?

Linda: Yes, don't try and be perfect. This isn't about perfection. And you can feel when everything is aligned, "Ah, that's perfection;" not necessarily. It's perfection that you're here. Everything is perfection, whatever happens. You could say perfection is lack of judgement, because then you don't see anything as a problem, it's just happening. But in your practice, yes, come back to the breath. Keep it as simple as possible. But don't see the times where you're thinking, when you realise, "Oh, I've been lost in thought," as something wrong. It doesn't mean you're doing something wrong. What you're doing is just realising that you want to be here more and more and that starts to become much more attractive. And realising that when you're not here you suffer. So you don't want to suffer obviously. It doesn't mean you're not going to feel pain. There will always be some sort of pain in the body. Maybe not emotional pain, which is suffering, but there will be physical pain. But we equate suffering and physical pain as the same thing.

So yes, keep it simple. It doesn't matter what you're thinking about. You start to see, when you look closely, how much you're thinking and how often you're thinking. And how you can't look at something very simple and not think about it – even a blank wall where there seems to be nothing, even *nothing* you try and think about. So just see that movement away from where you actually are which is here in your body, simply here in your body. Don't look for any deep realisations or don't think that you should feel a particular way. It's not about that; it's about coming back to the body and becoming more and more grounded in the body and eventually realising, "I am not this body." But you do that through the body. Keep it simple, as simple as possible. No thought is real. It's just a movement; it's just an avoidance of being here.

Question: Yes, I feel that if I'm just here and the thoughts could keep going on, it's a distraction going there, but if I'm just here, with thoughts or emotional pain or physical pain, it changes and it just becomes energy. But I'm not expecting it or hoping for glimpses, I'm not hoping for anything. Just I love doing this and there is a kind of surrender that this is a life-long thing.

Linda: It is a life-long thing and that's what's exciting about it, that's what excites me. Because every time I sit I go more deeply into now. Now is like a bottomless pit. There's not this point where it ends, it hasn't got a start or an end. But going towards that you do think that you want an end; all you want is an end to your suffering, and that does happen. But now never ends, and you never want it to end – that's how amazing it is. Having something that you never want to end is the most amazing way to live. You realise your body is going to end one day but that becomes secondary. It's not that your body is not important. Of course it's important to be able to function, and enjoy it as much as you can, but it becomes secondary.

So just keep doing what you're doing. If you find yourself getting too caught up in things don't see them as a distraction. It's up to you not to be distracted, so in the end *nothing* will distract you. You'll become so firmly embedded in now that *nothing* can take you out of it.

Question: I'm feeling more suborn, like, "No, I want to be here." And keeping things simple I think really helps, because if mind is throwing deeper stuff...

Linda: Yes, it's the best way to deal with the mind – to keep it simple – and your mind *hates* that, because it wants to complicate everything. It wants you to look at something and think about it and embellish it, make it better, and not be satisfied with being here. It wants you to complicate everything – it can't stand things being simple, just, "This is it, this is simple." So it will fight back and really try to get you to come with it. And that is a very, very deep habit because you've been doing it for most of your life. So it's not going to go away overnight. So when you do get caught up in thinking it's not that you're doing something wrong, it's just part of all this. And you need to use that as a reason to keep going. So never see it as a distraction, it's a reason to keep going – "Ah, there's a bit more. Okay, I'll keep going."

Linda: How are you B.?

Question: Fairly good, I think. I don't know that I've progressed in any way, anywhere.

Linda: What do you mean "anywhere"? Where do you want to be?

Question: I don't know what progress would be.

Linda: No, you don't, and the less you know the more progress there is.

Question: I feel most of the time peaceful.

Linda: Good.

Question: Occasionally thoughts of inadequacy come but most of the time I don't worry about it.

Linda: That's great.

Question: Otherwise nothing much has changed.

Linda: Well, I feel a lot has changed. Look at you – saying you feel peaceful most of the time. Would you have said that a few years ago?

Question: No, I couldn't have. Certainly not ten years ago. I suppose I was always trying to do better. But now there isn't any better so I can just be peaceful about it all. I suppose I'd like *more* peace. That would be the progress.

Linda: Well after this seven-days you'll feel more peace.

Question: Thankyou, that's good. If there's not, I'll complain. (Laughter.)

Linda: I never usually say that to anyone; I never promise anything much. But I feel you will.

I remember when I first started feeling peace, real peace. It felt like something real that I could actually touch and pick up. It was the most amazing feeling.

Question: It's a good feeling because you haven't got all that going on inside, in the mind first then it's going to the heart or wherever, and that's not good. But if you just don't worry about anything then it's all right.

Linda: Yes, your body becomes silent.

Question: Yes, a kind of a silence there.

Linda: So something happens, there's a noise, and there's not that comment on the noise.

Question: I can hear all the kitchen too but I don't care, because it doesn't matter if there's noise in the kitchen does it?

Linda: No, when there's a bit of noise you appreciate when it's really quiet too. You stop going, "This is good, this is bad, this is right, this is wrong."

Question: Well, I still have my judgements but I don't take them seriously.

Linda: You still have preferences, but the judgements become less and less. I know for me if there is a slight judgement there I see it straight away and it goes. And rather than see it as something wrong I just go, "Ah, something else I can let go."

Question: I will try and work on that when one comes. Thankyou.